Date: February 20, 2019
Contact: Veronica Farias
Phone: (509) 886-6427
E-mail: Veronica.Farias@cdhd.wa.gov

Drug Overdoses Become a Notifiable Condition in Chelan and Douglas Counties

East Wenatchee, WA – The opioid epidemic continues to be a significant problem locally and nationally. Almost every family is affected. One duty of Public Health is to track and report on epidemics. That is why the Health Officer for Chelan and Douglas Counties, Francis J.V. Collins, MD, DDS, recently made life-threatening or fatal drug overdoses a notifiable condition. This means health care providers in Chelan and Douglas Counties are obligated to report such overdoses, using a Drug Overdose Reporting Form available at: https://cdhd.wa.gov/notifiable-conditions/#drugoverdose.

Not every overdose is related to opioids. For example, as pharmaceutical-quality opioids become harder to access, some users are switching to other drugs. Overdoses can be intentional or accidental, but not all overdoses involve a substance use disorder. The information generated by these reports will help track the situation as it changes, and monitor the effect of prevention measures. For some people, an overdose can be a turning point where treatment may be accepted. The approach being used is designed to protect individuals’ privacy while offering help when needed.

Health Officer, Dr. Collins, explained his decision in a January 29, 2019 letter to local health care providers and officials in Chelan and Douglas Counties. A copy of the Health Officer’s letter is available at: https://cdhd.wa.gov/notifiable-conditions/#drugoverdose. Washington Administrative Code 246-101-505 (3)(d) grants the local health officer the authority to “require the notification of additional conditions of public health importance occurring within the jurisdiction of the local health officer”. Chelan-Douglas Health District and local health care providers will work in collaboration with The Center for Alcohol & Drug Treatment to offer treatment, yet Public Health will only receive depersonalized versions of the reports.

Additional Resources:
Chelan-Douglas Health District
The Center for Alcohol & Drug Treatment

###